

U.S. Virgin Islands

Our Land, Our Water, Our Heritage

#SaveLWCF

America's most important conservation and recreation program will expire in less than a year unless Congress acts. For 52 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has protected national parks and open spaces in every corner of the United States. But in less than 52 weeks, it could be gone forever and along with it, future protection of the places we love.

[LWCF](#) has invested more than \$18.5 million to protect the U.S. Virgin Islands' outdoor places, open access to beaches, hiking, and fishing, and to build close to home parks. From historic sites, to the Virgin Islands' stunning shorelines and wildlife habitat, LWCF has protected places like Virgin Islands National Park, Forest Legacy Projects on St. Croix Island, and over \$2.2 million into local parks including public beach access for tourists and locals alike.

The U.S. Virgin Islands recently experienced one of our history's most catastrophic hurricane seasons, resulting in severe damage across this Caribbean paradise that over 100,000 Americans call home and millions of tourists visit each year. Programs like LWCF are necessary for preserving coastal habitat which acts as a natural barrier during weather events and protects the places we love.

Maho Bay

Located within Virgin Islands National Park on St. John Island, the stunning and pristine Maho Bay was protected using multi-phase LWCF funding totaling \$9 million. There are more than 800 species of flora found in the park, habitat for endangered species such as hawksbill and green sea turtles, breeding grounds for 30 species of tropical birds, and historic and archeological sites dating back to 770 B.C. Maho Bay is also home to extensive recreational opportunities such as eco-campgrounds, public access beaches, wildlife viewing, and boating in the bay. Without the availability of LWCF funding, Maho Bay was at risk of development, destroying the cultural, natural, and historic significance of the area and limiting access to the privileged few.



Maho Bay Photo Credit: Steve Simonsen

“Virgin Islands National Park is such an important part of our island and means a lot to our local community, supporting \$34 million in labor and providing \$900 million in economic output. We’re so grateful that LWCF funds were available to protect places like Maho Bay, and with the hard work of NPS staff and volunteers, we are thrilled that the park has officially been reopened after the extensive hurricane damage.”

– Joe Kessler, President, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park

Annaly Bay and Hermitage Valley

This multi-year Forest Legacy Project on St. Croix Island is essential to protect the area from pressure for resort development which would result in significant environmental degradation due to the erosion caused by building on steep slopes. Compromised of dry and moist tropical forests, caves in steep cliffs, 565 acres of coral reefs along the shoreline, and home to threatened species such as sea turtles, Annaly Bay and Hermitage Valley are a priority to preserve the history and natural beauty of the island. There is a funding request of \$396,000 in the FY18 budget, which would allow for the purchase of 20 acres of garden plots and contribute to the overall integrity of the landscape if Congress appropriates enough funds to LWCF.



Hawksbill Sea Turtle Credit: NPS

#SaveLWCF to protect the places we love in the U.S. Virgin Islands!

www.lwcfcoalition.org/lwcf52weeks/